

STATE PAPERS

'Paisley KFC smear attempt' by the NIO

Eamon Phoenix
newsdesk@irishnews.com

FORMER DUP leader Ian Paisley complained about alleged attempts by the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) to smear him in the media, including a suggestion that he could "eat himself to death on Kentucky Fried Chicken". At a meeting with then secretary of state Peter Brooke and UUP leader James Molyneux in February 1991, Mr Paisley said he was "disturbed" by allegedly hostile briefings with foreign and British journalists. Local journalists had been excluded because, he claimed, "they would not fall for NIO disinformation". Previously confidential files reveal that he cited a story in *The Economist* in which an NIO source was quoted as hoping that "he would eat himself to death on Kentucky Fried Chicken". In addition, junior members of the DUP were being "wined and dined" by NIO officials, seeking to persuade them to be "disloyal to the leader". Mr Brooke, himself a former foreign correspondent, said he would take with "a pinch of salt" what any journalist told him about their sources but he undertook to have the allegations investigated.

Enniskillen bombing may have been a premeditated attack

Ed Carty

THE Enniskillen bombing may have been a carefully planned and premeditated attack, previously secret Irish government papers have revealed.

Documents released under the 30-year rule show officials were tasked with gauging the thinking behind the Remembrance Sunday atrocity which claimed 12 lives and left another 63 injured.

One diplomat warned the bombing may have been calculated to provoke loyalist paramilitaries.

In a report for the Department of Foreign Affairs in Dublin five days after the attack, the senior official disputed the IRA and Sinn Féin's explanation for the bombing and huge loss of life.

"The operation may not have been a bungled 'maverick' action, as Sinn Féin and the IRA have suggested," a diplomat wrote.

"It may have been a carefully planned, premeditated



■ **ATROCITY:** The scene in Enniskillen in 1987 where an IRA bomb killed 12 people and injured 63 others

attack on Remembrance Day, aimed at provoking a loyalist backlash, driving a wedge between the two governments and bringing the Protestant community and the British back together.

"There are also suggestions that it may have been a revenge attack for what the IRA regarded as the 'desecration' of its ceremony honouring its dead at the Derry

funerals on November 2."

The document, released by the National Archives in Dublin, was marked "Analysis of Sinn Féin/IRA reaction to the Enniskillen bombing".

It said there had been unprecedented criticism of the atrocity from within republican ranks.

Prior to the 1987 Poppy Day bomb the official noted that an "esprit de corps"

normally existed among hardline republicans which saw them stand by the IRA no matter how heavily the "flak" flew.

"Enniskillen, if not quite shattering the principle, certainly provided it with a severe jolt," it said.

The file on the bombing also revealed that Margaret Thatcher, prime minister at the time, viewed the attack as the "last straw" in a list of failures under the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Dermot Gallagher, a senior Irish government diplomat, wrote a confidential note on a lunch meeting with the PM's press secretary, Bernard Ingham.

"There was a deep sense of shock in No 10," he said.

The PM's office warned it would be difficult to manage Dublin's call for new extradition laws to be deferred in the wake of the atrocity.

"Enniskillen has hardened Mrs Thatcher's heart," Mr Ingham said.

Previously confidential documents on the fall-

out from the atrocity also showed SDLP leader John Hume initially believed the IRA could not have carried out the attack.

Two days after the incident he told a Department of Foreign Affairs contact that he subsequently changed his mind and that the Provos were to blame "in the knowledge that there would be civilian casualties".

"If so they had completely misread the Catholic view of Poppy Day," he said.

"Catholics deeply respected the act of remembrance and of course nearly every household in Ireland had a relative in one or both of the world wars."

Mr Hume said the Protestants of Enniskillen had shown extraordinary Christian reaction, particularly Gordon Wilson, who said he would pray for the terrorists after holding after his daughter's hand as she died in the rubble.

The documents were in files from the Department of Foreign Affairs 2017/4/70.

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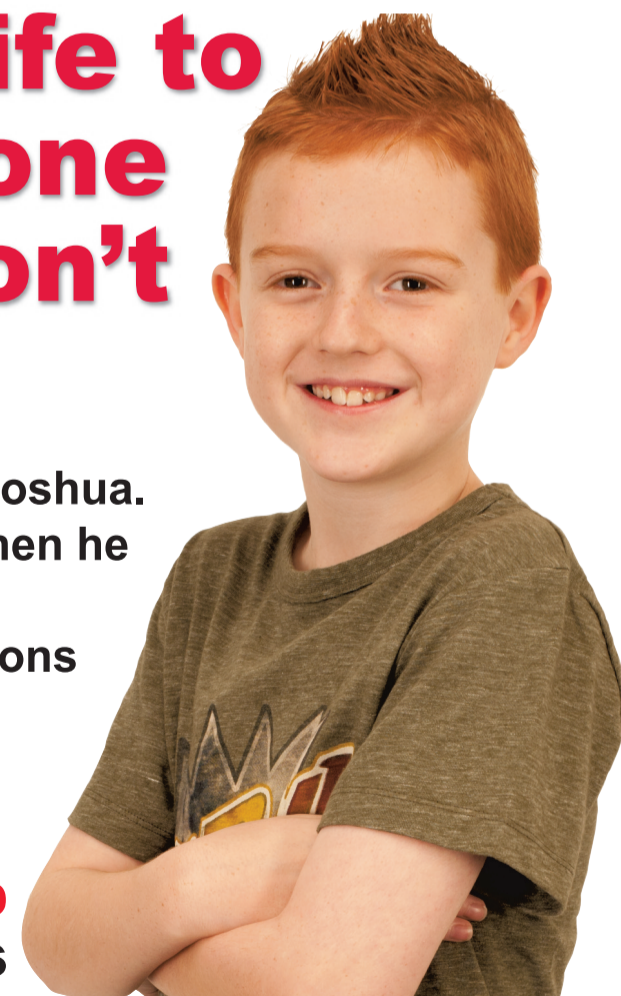
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